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Y<sup>e</sup> AMHERST GIRL

OF

Y<sup>e</sup> OLDEN TYME

BY

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COVER DESIGN

BY

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AMHERST MASS.

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## Y<sup>e</sup> Amherst Girl of Y<sup>e</sup> Olden Tyme

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THE history of a town should be known to each of its citizens, for one cannot appreciate the privileges of the present age without some understanding of the causes which have produced these conditions.

Scattered throughout the length and breadth of our land, we meet, here and there, real "Daughters of the Revolution," whose memories extend backward to the time of the thirteen states, and who have heard from the lips of father and grandfather personal recollections of the war for independence. They tell us of a time when the dispute as to the beginning of the nineteenth century had scarcely been settled, and the Congress of the new country, with Jefferson at its head, was moving from Philadelphia into the wilderness, to a site on the Potomac, selected by Washington, and named by him "Federal City." The American navy was just coming into existence, and officers and seamen were performing deeds of daring before Tripoli, which have never been forgotten. Down the Ohio in great flat-boats floated emigrants from the east, and there, in that interior country, they lived in

the rudest manner possible, their settlements constituting the "West" of that early day. The extreme western line of the United States was the Mississippi river, but the unbroken prairies and forests of that unknown region seemed to New England boys and girls about as far away as the interior of Alaska does to the present generation.

Beyond the sea, in France, one hundred years ago, the great Napoleon was exhibiting the trophies of his Egyptian expedition, and all Paris was wild with enthusiasm. In striking contrast to the glittering pomp and show of that gorgeous spectacle, streamers of somber crape were fluttering from flags and standards; across the English Channel, too, banners at half-mast indicated that another great nation was in mourning. A plain Virginian gentleman, George Washington by name, had died at Mount Vernon, and the world honored his memory and sorrowed at his loss.

The people of those early days, having neither railroad nor steamboat, travelled by sailing packets, the duration of all voyages being dependent upon the wind. By land, they rode in coaches, taking six days to go from New York to Boston; sometimes two persons travelled with one horse, according to the method called "Ride and Tie," by which one rode a distance, then tied the horse and walked on, leaving the other a chance to ride in his turn. Pack horses and heavy wagons carried all

the freight that went by land, and boats pushed with poles and loaded with provisions and baggage moved slowly up or down the rivers.

These customs, with many others as novel in their way, prevailed at the beginning of the century, when the oldest persons now living were yet too young to understand them. The country had but recently buried many heroes of the Revolution, and the spirit of the fathers had descended in four-fold measure upon their children, as, with a heroism worthy of their sires, they compelled the stony hillsides of New England to furnish them a livelihood. "The Sword of Bunker Hill" hung full in view above the farmer's fireplace, a constant inspiration and reminder to him and to his family. The soldier had become a man of peace, and how to make a living from the farm was the problem staring him in the face.

Throughout our fertile valley, his difficulties in respect to soil were less than in many other parts of New England, but here, as everywhere, the forest was his foe. With hand tools, clumsy and blunted, the Hampshire county farmer ruthlessly destroyed the fine old oaks and elms, leaving now and then one to stand alone, a living witness to the beauty and majesty of its doomed companions. We pass these ancient landmarks to-day without a thought as to the tales their whispering leaves could tell us, could we only understand their language. They murmur to each other of the days when this old state

itself was young, and our town was only just considered of sufficient importance to have a name of its own, for until that time it had been called Hadley East Precinct, or sometimes Hadley Farms.

The meaning of the word Amherst is "edgewood," or the "border of a wood." When we realize that in those days the mountain ranges were wooded to their very summits and all about the settlement were innumerable trees, we feel the full significance of the name which Thomas Pownall, Governor General of the Province, gave to the little hamlet in honor of his distinguished friend, Lord Amherst, hero of Louisburg and conqueror of Canada, whose portrait hangs in our public library, and a sketch of whose life may be found in the history of the town.

Let us imagine a traveller on horseback riding into this new town of Amherst at the beginning of the 19th century. The same blue skies were overhead, but the old sun, which shines to-day, illumined a very different scene from the one spread out before the admiring gaze of strangers of the present generation. Upon the site now occupied by the Amherst House, the traveller saw a yellow two-story structure, with many small-paned windows. From a stout post in front was suspended the old wooden sign, now annually displayed at the county fair. This building was the Boltwood tavern, one of the best



known inns in Western Massachusetts ; and on the old sign one might read the words :

AMHERST HOTEL,

E. BOLTWOOD,

and behold the picture of a fearful-looking creature, like no animal on earth, but probably meant to represent a lion.

Such tavern signs were often adorned with lines of poetry. A Boston inn had the picture of a nondescript vessel with the inscription :

“SHIP IN DISTRESS.

With sorrows I am compassed round.  
Pray lend a hand, my ship's aground.”

Another sign bore the following :

“ This is the bird that never flew,  
This is the tree that never grew,  
This is the ship that never sails,  
This is the can that never fails.”

No poetry, however, appeared on the sign of the Boltwood tavern, though the can that “ never failed ” could be found inside at the bar. These taverns of New England have been a fertile source of material for the romance writer. They were the centres of social life at home, as well as gateways to the outside world. For many years the Boltwood tavern ranked high among the inns in this

part of the state, and its old registers bore the names of men of national and international fame.

Standing near this famous house, the stranger looked about him with curious eyes. Before him, running north and south, lay the Pleasant street of to-day, with Main street cutting it at right angles and taking the general direction east and west. These two streets were forty rods wide, or twice as wide as the elm shaded road of old Hadley. Thus the houses were built facing a broad open lot, a part of which is the common of to-day.

Nearly opposite the Boltwood tavern stood the Strong house, built in 1744, and thus fifty-six years old when Amherst was in its infancy. We notice with interest the deep yard and magnificent trees in front of this old dwelling, which stands substantially the same as it did a hundred and fifty years ago. This yard, and the one belonging to Miss Cowles on North Pleasant street, show the width of these old highways, laid out when the town contained but twenty-five dwelling-houses and land was cheap and abundant. Three of these houses at the beginning of the century had the aristocratic, gambrel roof, and the old Strong house is the only remaining specimen of the kind. A pear tree behind this venerable mansion is said to have been planted by Judge Strong, and is therefore one hundred and fifty years old.

A general country store, the only one in town, stood on the corner opposite the tavern, where could be bought

all the necessities of life not raised upon the farm; for, it must be remembered, all the inhabitants of Amherst at that time were farmers, and the village, as yet, was unthought of. A quiet place it was in which those early Amherst people dwelt. The trees were full of singing birds, and at night the cries of wild animals could be heard on the mountain sides. But no yells of students, no ringing of bicycle bells, nor whizz of trolley, nor locomotive whistle broke the silence. On the other hand, some sounds were heard which would be novel to our ears. Upon the common, which was partly a swamp and partly a stony and uneven pasture, the farmers' cows wandered at their will, and the clangor of their bells struck harshly on the ear, mingled with the creaking of the old wooden pump in front of the tavern, which furnished water for its distinguished guests.

On the east side of the common, clumps of alders grew beside a goose pond, on whose stagnant surface floated large flocks of geese, pursuing their squawking way by day and resting at night near the residence of their owners. The youthful swain, returning from his courting late at night through the crooked, unlighted streets, no doubt sometimes encountered these noisy watchmen, who, in their alarm, betrayed at once the intruder and the lateness of the hour. A pond of that description in the center of the town we should not consider ornamental. But the accommodation of the goose was

important to those early settlers, as the selling of feathers was a source of great profit and the feather bed was a necessity of life. There was, besides, little time for landscape gardening, and the Village Improvement Society had not yet been organized. The worthy fathers and mothers in Israel plodded slowly past goose pond and pasture and swamp, down a street as crooked as the rail fence which skirted its eastern border, in rainy seasons muddy to an untold depth. Oftentimes finding it impossible to pick their way where sidewalks were unknown, they climbed painfully along the fence, thankful that their clothes were of stout homespun and their home-made leather shoes impervious to water.

We somehow have an idea that only old people lived in olden times, and do not realize that in the twenty-five dwellings which made up the town, only a few of which remain to-day, boys and girls were growing up and going to school, and enjoying themselves as only boys and girls can. Most of them became the ancestors of the present inhabitants of Amherst. In many families are handed down heir-looms which belonged to them,—great-grandmother's china, or bedquilts, or old mahogany table or high-backed arm-chair, or perhaps her gold beads and her wedding dress.

We have gained some idea as to what sort of a town was the home of this grandmother of ours whose memory we cherish, and next we cannot fail to ask, How did she

live? Who were her friends? Where did she go to church and where to school? What sort of training did she have in those days, when high schools and colleges for girls were unknown? How did she look and dress and talk?

A careful search into the history of the town and of the valley has produced answers to some of the questions as regards the individual girl, and other authorities tell us about the habits and customs which, prevailing throughout the state, must have been common here.

A girl in old New England from the day of her birth had a hard struggle for life. Regardless of cold or storm, the Sunday following she was carried to church to be baptized, and there oftentimes, a long, unmusical name was given her. Old-fashioned names have lately become the fashion, but we do not often hear to-day of girls being christened Prudence, Experience, Waitstill, Thankful, Desire, Supply, Submit and Unite. Wishing to accustom her baby girl to hardships early in life, the Puritan mother clothed her in the thinnest of linen garments, rocked her in a clumsy wooden cradle, and dosed her with all sorts of terrible home-made mixtures. "Snail water" was a favorite remedy. A large spoonful of sulphur and molasses every morning before breakfast was considered to be good for her blood.

The country doctor in those days could exhibit no college diploma, and had acquired no hospital practice.

He had simply taken care of the horse of an old established practitioner, run errands, pounded drugs and acted as driver, until he had absorbed enough medical wisdom to set out for himself. Should any of the family really be sick, this wise physician would come riding up, and spread before the sufferer a display of surgical instruments calculated to frighten a grown person out of his wits. The doctor earned his fee in those days, and the calomel and physic he administered were wont to kill or cure. He was also a dentist and twisted out teeth with great iron turn-keys after the most approved fashion. He even made false teeth from the tusks of the hippopotamus. George Washington procured a set of that kind just before he died, which, it was said, greatly improved his personal appearance. An advertisement in a Boston paper in 1795 was headed: "Live Teeth. A generous price paid for human front teeth perfectly sound, by Dr. Skinner." These teeth were to be set in other and vainer persons' mouths.

A remedy called "sage wine" was supposed to be especially efficacious in treating "a cold stomach," a curious disease from which our forefathers often suffered. Of this medicine an old writer says, "It will cure all aches and humours in the joints, and dry rheums, and keep off all diseases to the fourth degree. It helps the dead palsy, and prevents convulsions. It sharpens the memory, and from the beginning of taking, will keep the

body mild and sane, and strengthen Nature until the fulness of your day be finished. Nothing will be changed in your strength except the change of hair. It will keep your teeth sound, and prevent swelling of the joints or body."

The "rain-water doctor" worked wondrous cures upon credulous invalids until, we are told, he was drowned in a hogsheaf of his own medicine at his own door. A "tar water" craze lived long among the country folk and died a lingering death. Smallpox was a disease much dreaded, and generally fatal, and before the system of vaccination was perfectly understood, parties were made up to go to the hospital together and have the smallpox. In 1784 advertisements might be seen in papers that, at different hospitals, "Classes will be admitted for smallpox," just as we read to-day of classes in music and drawing. If the old time Amherst girl desired to escape probable disfigurement and perhaps death, should she be exposed to the disease, she would have to leave town for her smallpox party, as such festivities were not held here. But generally she was strong and well, with an appetite for breakfast wholly unlike that of the modern society young lady.

Upon the farmer's table in those days could be found an abundance of plain, well cooked food, of which it was the fashion to partake heartily three times a day. The kitchen in old New England was the centre of the farm-

er's family, and here, by the aid of the great brick oven, and the coals in the open fire-place, the housewife baked and roasted and broiled such viands as we seldom taste to-day, seasoned as they were by that most appetizing of all sauces, hunger. Salt pork, baked beans, and Indian pudding, rye and Indian bread, parched corn and hoe cake, beef and mutton raised upon the farm, and game shot in the woods, were served up daily to the farmer's family. Cider was the common drink and was used freely by all the children until 1825, when the need of reform became so evident that the farmers cut down whole orchards of thriving apple trees, ignoring the possibility of using the fruit for food instead of drink. Long before this dried leaves from China, called tea, were introduced, boiled until bitter, drunk without milk or sugar, even the grounds being buttered, salted and eaten. At a Sunday dinner in the house of John Adams in 1817, the first course consisted of Indian meal pudding and molasses, in the opinion of the guests "a very dainty dish."

It is supposed that by this time Amherst people were eating potatoes properly cooked, though it had taken years of endeavor to learn to like them. No wonder; for in 1700 in New England potatoes were boiled, seasoned with nutmeg, cinnamon, pepper, mixed with dates, lemon and mace, covered with butter, sugar and grape juice, iced with rose water and sugar, and called a "secret



pye." It does not seem strange that they were not popular at first.

Besides the articles above mentioned, the finest of shad from the Connecticut river might often be seen upon the farmer's table, his pride being sufficiently overcome to allow him to eat it. In Colonial times, when plenty of salt pork was considered to be a proof of wealth, the Connecticut valley settler would not take advantage of the riches which the river brought to his very door, lest eating shad should imply a deficiency of pork. A story is told of a Hadley family before the Revolution about to dine upon shad, who, hearing a knock at the door, immediately hid the platter of fish under the bed, lest its poverty be noised abroad. It was not until a comparatively late day that the excellence and abundance of the fish overcame this foolish idea, and the farmers of Amherst, with others up and down the valley, mounted their horses and rode to the fishing place at Hockanum, coming back with loads of what is considered to be one of the greatest delicacies of our modern menus.

Our girl was perhaps the eldest daughter of a large family, for in those days large families were fashionable, seventeen and even twenty children having been known to belong to one father and mother. At an early age, she attended a cooking school in her mother's kitchen, and practiced her lessons by the light of a tallow candle, which she had previously helped to manufacture. Should

her mother have too many girls and some good neighbor not have any, she transferred her service to the house of the neighbor, and no disgrace was attached to the idea of "working out." Housework was honorable in Puritan households and to be a good housekeeper was the ambition of every feminine heart. The farmer's daughter also took "Physical Culture" as a part of her home course. She could wield the heavy old birch brooms and beat and turn those voluminous feather beds with energy and grace. The dasher of the big wooden churn in her vigorous hands flew up and down with a will, and the balls of golden butter took form and comeliness beneath her skillful touch. She could go out in the field, catch the old mare, and ride her bareback over steep and stony college hill with the bag of grain or wheat to be ground, as well as could any of her brothers. She helped her mother, also, in the picking of those geese before mentioned.

But though the farmer's daughter early learned to take much pride in the successful accomplishment of these prosaic household tasks, yet for art she also had what was then called "a pretty fancy." She loved fine knitting, and produced many curious and elaborate stitches, the "herring bone" and "fox and geese" being favorites. It is recorded that one clever Shelburne damsel could knit the alphabet and a verse of poetry into one pair of mittens. Marvellous are the patterns of the

patchwork quilts which have come down to us, and which we keep in memory of our revered ancestor who invented them. We look with wonder upon the tiny stitches in those linen sheets which grandma wove and spun and hemmed, when she was a girl, and upon the fine embroidery on that old fichu, so carefully preserved. In making paper and hair flowers and painting upon velvet and in other lost arts of the kind, the old time Amherst girl was in no way behind the girls of other towns, and again, as in the department of domestic economy, her mother was her teacher.

The kind of clothes she wore we know something about from those which are brought out sometimes to wear at old folk's concerts, and Martha Washington tea parties. During the autumn a dye tub was placed in the chimney corner, and, covered with a board, formed a cozy seat. Sometimes, as the hours dragged slowly after the family had retired, it became the "anxious seat" of the lover, the object of his addresses sitting demurely in the opposite corner. Perhaps the family did not retire; then the unfortunate pair were forced to use a "courting stick," a hollow tube, six or eight feet long, fitted with mouth and ear pieces. In this manner, telephonic love-making could be carried on in the presence of a crowd, and no one would be the wiser. One of these courting sticks, used in the vicinity, is said to be still preserved in Longmeadow, a proof that this queer custom really

existed in the Connecticut valley. The difficulties attending courtship had no effect upon the early marriages which prevailed, most girls being married soon after their sixteenth year. Should one fail of marriage, at a very early age she would be called an old maid. We read of one "Antient Maid" of twenty-five years, and at thirty they called her a "Thornback."

But all this time we have left our damsel sitting in the chimney corner, while her lover toasts his shins on the tub of blue dye opposite. This dye was used to color the yarn for stockings and cloth of all kinds, and the "linsey woolsey" made by the farmer's wife and daughters. The village dressmaker travelled from house to house, cutting and fitting garments from this cloth for the women of the family, and the tailor did the same for men and boys, both making their tongues fly as fast as their shears and fingers. The shoemaker also, on his periodical visits, from the home-cured hide of the family cow made boots and shoes for all, which were extremely useful, if not exactly ornamental.

Fashion books were unknown at the beginning of the century; but the city dressmaker imported little dolls from England, which she exhibited in her windows, dressed in miniature costumes of latest style. The modes of hair-dressing were wonderful, and at an earlier date wigs were worn by very fashionable people. A New England country maiden, visiting Boston for the first

time, wrote home to her mother as follows: "Now mama, what do you think I am going to ask for? A wig. I must either cut my hair or have one. I cannot dress it at all stylish. How much time it will save in one year! We could save it in hairpins and paper, and besides, the trouble." Extravagance prevailed among wealthy people, and, as was natural, the poorer classes tried to make up in show what they lacked in money. In Colonial days, the law attempted to regulate matters of dress as well as religion. The wearing of silk by common people was a special offense, and we find that one young miss, Hannah Lyman by name, of Northampton, was prosecuted for "wearing silk in a flaunting manner, in an offensive way and garb, not only before, but also when she stood presented in court."

We can easily picture youthful Hannah, dressed in her fine silk gown, standing before the lawyers, inwardly rejoicing at the unusual opportunity of displaying her rich attire thus in public. The subject of sleeves was also one of great importance. The law allowed them to be slashed but once, and to be but "half an ell wide," and short sleeves, by which "the nakedness of the arms was displayed" were prohibited. However we find no record that any Amherst girl was arrested for wearing too fine clothes, and it is not at all probable that she dressed her hair in the fashion which inspired the poem entitled "The Artifices of Handsomeness," in which a Revolutionary soldier wrote:

“Ladies, you had better leave off your high rolls,  
Lest by extravagance you lose your poor souls,  
Then haul out the wool and likewise the tow,  
’Twill clothe our whole army, I very well know.”

In Colonial days schooling for girls was not considered of much importance, but Amherst has always been liberal and progressive, and at the beginning of the present century, about eight schoolhouses might have been found in different sections of the town. The girl who lived here in the center went to the schoolhouse which was the only building between the Boltwood tavern and college hill, and was a type of all the rest. This building, on the muddy crooked street, consisted of four walls, with doors and windows, built at the least possible expense. Around three sides extended desks, in front of which were rows of wooden benches, and on these, with dangling feet, the young Puritan struggled with tasks seldom required to-day of advanced college students. The modern text-book with its large print and beautiful pictures, designed to make the path to wisdom broad and easy, was then unknown. From Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall*, which served as a reader, to those old works on Mathematics, fitted to puzzle a modern professor, all was hard, knotty and obscure. And yet, from out the district school, that place of trial and discomfort, what splendid powers of intellect and will came forth, what abundance of mental and moral energy issued, producing

for the world that type of character upon which rests the structure of our civilization !

Books of any kind at that time, especially books for the young, were rare and expensive. We are told that the Farmer's Almanac was to the entire family "guide, councillor and friend, a magazine, cyclopedia and jest book." Upon the blank borders of its pages the owner is said to have kept "an account of his purchases, of the amount of liquor he drank, of the births and deaths in his family, of the number of his lottery tickets." Novels were thought to be very wicked, and unfit for young people to read. However, just before 1800 appeared some innocent volumes entitled "Original Love Letters," "Fifteen Comforts of Matrimony," "The Elopement," "Six Dialogues of Young Misses Relating to Matrimony." These must have been intended for youthful maidens, for at the same time Boston ladies of mature age were reading novels entitled "The Power of Sympathy, or The Triumph of Nature," and "The Helpless Orphan, or the Innocent Victim of Revenge," works, if we may judge from their titles, manifestly unfit for guileless youth of either sex. Scribbling on the title-page and blank leaves of the precious volumes was a habit even of that age, which an examination of certain hymn-books of to-day might prove to have been handed down to the third and fourth generations. We are sure no demure Amherst

damsel, however strong her belief in the devil, ever wrote the sentiment found in one old volume :

“ If you dare to steal this book,  
The devil will catch you on his hook.”

illustrated by a picture of a grotesque figure with pitchfork and enormous gridiron.

Out from among the trees on college hill, before a thought of the college had entered the minds of the people, peeped the one ugly white meeting-house in which the citizens of the whole town worshipped the Lord after the good old Puritan fashion. This was the “second meeting house,” with a belfry and a porch and a lightning rod, and even a bell which at nine of the clock at night struck its warning to all young people that it was time for them to be in bed.

At the north end, high upon the wall, on a level with the galleries, hung the pulpit, and over it a sounding-board, against which the preacher's forceful words rebounded, and fell like cannon balls upon the heads of his congregation. In front of the pulpit, on the deacons' seat, a row of sober-faced deacons faced the audience. The boys in the gallery on the right and the girls on the left played quiet pranks among themselves, with one eye ever on the tithing man, who with his long rod moved stealthily among them, in a vain endeavor to keep them quiet during the two or three hours of preaching and one hour of prayer which was considered the proper propor-



tion. From the gallery opposite the pulpit, for many years without the help of any instrument, the choir sang from "Watts' Select Hymns," until in 1839 a double bass viol was procured and a more modern hymn-book substituted. Such innovations were looked upon with suspicion by many, but protest was in vain, for then, as now, the young and frivolous would have their way.

The weekly singing school, to which all singers were invited, was the delight of the girls and boys as well, who loved to sing and who easily mastered all the changes of key and difficult music notation taught by the "singing teacher." How vigorously he beat the time with head and hand and foot, as he sang with both spirit and understanding, and how the untrained voices rang out in those old hymns, which are the same yesterday, to-day and forever! Besides the hymns and anthems, at that old singing school they sang the Round, the Glee and the Madrigal, and many a simple melody, now almost forgotten. Irish, English and Scotch ballads were favorites with all, and were sung long before the writers of American songs were born. These were the popular songs when our grandmothers were young, and many of us have heard the dear old lady sing them. In their simplicity and sweetness they appeal to our hearts with a tender suggestion of old time fashion and fancy, a vision of the simple life and homely ways of long ago.

Besides the singing school, for recreation our girl and

her companions went to apple parings and husking bees, where red ears were always plentiful. She skated on the river, for in those days ice came to stay all winter, and though her clumsy skates would seem odd enough to-day, they answered her purpose very well. She had a good time, we may be sure, or she would not have lived out half her long and useful life.

In 1812, perhaps, she took her first journey. With crack of whip and blowing of horn, up to the Boltwood tavern rolled the heavy stage coach, bound from Albany to Boston. The little hair trunk, studded thickly with brass-headed nails, was slung with the other baggage up behind. The mail was stowed away, for this was the "fast mail coach," and the jubilant damsel put in charge of a dignified gentleman, also on his way to Boston, and away they rolled, down to the old Bay Road.

We wonder if her bright eyes, peering beneath the shadow of the broad-brimmed hat she wore, took in the beauties of the scene before her; if she thought of the Indian, whose widened trail the white man had made his chief thoroughfare; of Braddock's defeated troops, who, on their way along this very road to Boston, stopped to water their horses where the three little mountain streams come together. The ledges of Bare Mountain, and the heavily wooded slopes of green Norwottuck, stood, as they stand to-day, sentinels above the historic highway; their rocky walls were, in less than a twelvemonth, to

re-echo to the rumble of cannon and of wagons conveying supplies for Commodore Perry's fleet on Lake Erie, which were dragged over this same Bay Road. We can only guess the thoughts which passed through the mind of the young Puritan maiden, as she sat by the side of one, for many years a resident of our town, in whose spelling book long words were soon to perplex the inmates of the district school, and whose dictionary is known all over the world. That Noah Webster lived in Amherst, perhaps we all have heard, but we can hardly realize how he walked about these very streets, and for ten years carried on his life work in his house in Phoenix Row, burned many years ago; how with his own hands he gathered in the hay, his daughters raking after; and how the very trees in a well known orchard were planted by him, whose residence in the town is always alluded to with pride and satisfaction.

Well might the farmer's daughter be proud to sit by his side during one of his frequent visits to the great metropolis of the state. We wish she had left her diary for us to read, giving her experiences during this wonderful visit, for we know she kept a diary; all girls did in those days. No doubt she heard of the strange boat, running by steam upon the Hudson River; but it was not wholly a novel idea to her, for her father could tell her that a boat propelled by steam ran on our own Connecticut back in 1793, and dreadful work it made, wheezing

and churning along through the water. In 1828 the side-wheel steamer *Barnet*, built in Springfield, puffed its way along on its journey to *Barnet*, Vermont. From all the neighboring towns, on horseback and on foot, the people flocked to see the wondrous sight, and we would doubtless be almost as much surprised at a similar appearance to-day, though we might not think, as did our forefathers, that the smoke pouring from its chimney proved the strange craft to be a near relation to the devil. But this new kind of boat was only one of the great inventions of that marvellous age, and Amherst too was changing fast. The learned men who dwelt within its borders desired a better education for their children than was given in the old district school; and therefore the girl who was born with the century could, at the age of fourteen, attend the Amherst academy, a three-story brick building located where the Amity street school building now stands, the second institution devoted to classical education in Hampshire county. For ten years this academy flourished, attracting pupils from every part of New England, though more than half the number were residents of the town.

Among the girls, one, a woman in stature, plain and awkward in appearance, commenced with Arithmetic and Grammar, and while she studied, conceived a plan, which afterward materialized on the other side of Holyoke Mountains. As a result of the training which Mary

Lyon received in Amherst academy, came Mount Holyoke college.

We can hardly realize that when the first idea of Amherst college entered the minds of men who saw far into the future history of the town, and were anxious for its welfare, the fund then started was called the "charity fund," "five-sixths of the interest of which shall be appropriated to the education of indigent, pious young men for the ministry;" and yet Professor Tyler assures us in those very words that such was the fact.

Our Amherst girl was grown and married, or had become one of those old maids of twenty-five, when plodding along the road leading to the village, a strange procession might have been seen. Ox teams, laden with building materials of all kinds, with lime and sand and lumber, driven by farmers from the ends of the town, from Leverett and Shutesbury and Belchertown, hastened to college hill, and deposited their burdens among the trees. Pelham contributed great blocks of stone, a firm foundation upon which to build, and all was a gift, without money and without price. The farmers turned out in force, and camped in tents upon the hill, and labored like the Jews building their temple. They plowed, and scraped and levelled, and dug the trenches for the foundations, and amid scenes of excitement such as the quiet town had never before witnessed, the brick dormitory which to-day we call South College, one hundred feet

long, thirty feet wide, and four stories high, rose solidly above the cornerstone of Pelham granite, on which it has rested securely for over eighty years.

With untiring zeal and unparalleled faith the building committee prosecuted the work. No funds were furnished, only materials and provisions; and repeatedly these were exhausted. Once, having deposited the last load of mortar upon the scaffold, with not a particle of lime remaining, the laborers were about to leave. Suddenly, just at night fall, a strange team was perceived, coming from the woods to the north. What was the astonishment of the workmen to find that a stranger who knew of the work, but was ignorant of their need, had sent a load of lime twenty-five miles just in time to meet the emergency. Ninety days from the laying of the corner stone the roof was placed upon the building. By the same self-denying labor the college well, which has been to so many a source of pleasure and refreshment, was dug. All this is proudly recalled to-day, as annually, at commencement, the students sing in their Memory Hymn to Old Amherst,

“ Here, in toil and stress of trial,  
Here in sturdy self-denial,  
Wrought, to found these hoary walls,  
Men whose lifelong consecration,  
Rich in sacred inspiration.  
Us to high endeavor calls,  
Ay, to largest manhood calls.”

And so this "charity institution," designed, in the words of Rev. Daniel A. Clark, who preached the sermon at the laying of the corner stone, "to bestow gratis a liberal education upon those who will enter the Gospel ministry, but who are too indigent to defray the expenses of their own education," was erected. The title of this sermon was "A plea for a miserable world."

On September 19, 1821, the first class gathered for college exercises. The students paid from a dollar to a dollar and a quarter per week for board, for washing twelve to twenty cents. They took care of their own rooms, and sawed their own wood. Each spring they had "chip day," when they turned out to scrape and clear up the ground near the buildings.

The collegian at this time, being a novelty in the village, was a great favorite with the farmer's family, who considered his society a pleasure. He received many favors from those who felt that to help a college student was one way of lending to the Lord. In the orchards the finest of apples and peaches grew in abundance, and chestnuts and walnuts dropped at his feet from the trees in the college grounds. All was free to the "indigent young man," and unlimited cider awaited him at every cidermill to encourage him in the pursuit of knowledge.

In sermons of that time, Amherst was called "a city set on a hill," but it might better have been called a village in the woods. In spite of determined effort to

destroy them, Dr. Tyler says, "Primal forests touched the rear of the college buildings, they filled up with a sea of waving branches the great interval between the college and Hadley; toward the south they prevailed gloriously, sending their green waves toward the base and up the sides of Mt. Holyoke. To the east they overspread the Pelham slope, and they fairly inundated the vast tracts northward clear away to the lofty hills of Sunderland and Deerfield. It was a sublime deluge which, alas, has only too much subsided in our day."

The Amherst girl of olden time lies now in that crowded cemetery, where every year the members of the G. A. R. decorate the graves of her brothers and friends who fell in the struggle for independence, or in that lovely spot on the hillside called "Wildwood." For, though she may have lived in other sections, or in foreign lands, her dying thoughts turned with longing toward her native valley, and her last wish was to be buried in the home of her childhood. Her spirit lingers about these ancient houses, and whispers to us in the murmuring tones of the old elm trees. With her own hands she fed and housed those "indigent young men" who first attended Amherst college. Her thirst for education, descending to her sons, established the high school, and to-day sends the many daughters of our town to crowd the colleges of the surrounding country. It is ours to imitate her virtues, and to make the most of our advan-



tages, so wonderful in proportion to the few which she enjoyed, and the results of which caused a writer of the past to say to his friend, who was seeking a wife :

“ And then such housewives as these Yankees make ;  
What can't they do? Bread, pudding, pastry, cake,  
Biscuit and buns can they mould, roll and bake.  
All they o'ersee, their babes, their singing birds,  
Parlor and kitchen, company and curds,  
Daughters and dairy, linen and the lunch  
For outdoor laborers instead of punch.  
The balls of butter, kept so sweet and cool,  
All the boys' heads before they go to school,  
Their books, their clothes, their lessons and the ball  
That she has wound and covered for them, all,  
All is o'erseen—o'erseen, nay it is done,  
By these same Yankee wives;—if you have run  
Thus far without one, toward your setting sun.  
Lose no more time, my friend—go home and speak for one.”





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